

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

- 5/9/04
entirely approved.
1. (Currently Amended) A bone plate comprising:
an upper surface;
a lower surface; and
a plurality of holes extending through the upper surface and the lower surfaces; the upper surface of the bone plate including a first upper portion and at least one second tapered portion, the second tapered portion located at at least one of the holes and sloping in a direction toward the lower surface such that a gap is formed between the first upper portion of the upper surface of the bone plate and an upper portion of a bone screw secured in the hole;
wherein at least one of the holes includes a protrusion disposed on the lower surface and at least partially surrounding the hole, and internal threads extending substantially from the upper surface to the lower surface; ~~wherein~~ and the bone plate defines a nominal plate thickness in regions between the holes, and the protrusion defines an increased plate thickness that is about 1.5 to 2 times greater than the nominal plate thickness.
 2. (Canceled)
 3. (Canceled)
 4. (Previously Presented) The bone plate of claim 1, wherein the nominal plate thickness is about 1 mm and the protrusion extends from the lower surface by about 0.8 mm.
 5. (Previously Presented) The bone plate of claim 1, wherein the protrusion is substantially annular.
 6. (Previously Presented) The bone plate of claim 1, wherein the protrusion minimizes contact between the lower surface and a bone.
 7. (Previously Presented) The bone plate of claim 1, wherein the hole defines a central axis, and the protrusion tapers radially inward with respect to the central axis in a direction from the upper surface toward the lower surface.
 8. (Canceled)
 9. (Original) The bone plate of claim 7, wherein the protrusion tapers radially inward, and defines a taper angle of about 40° to about 100°.